**Summary**: From 6-7 November, the Institute for Global Engagement’s Center for Women of Faith & Leadership (CWFL) and The Telos Group convened 30 women from Israel, Palestine, and the U.S. for a 2-day conference entitled “Women & Human Rights in Israel-Palestine.” Rather than presenting yet another women’s event, this gathering showcased the diversity and expertise of women engaging in peacebuilding, social justice, and human rights—including religious freedom—in the Holy Land, from both sides of the border. In this safe space, away from the daily challenges and stresses that these women are confronted with, participants explored the opportunities and challenges faced by Israeli, Palestinian, and American Christian women in their efforts to advocate for the protection of human rights and peace in the region.

**Panel One: Women in Peace and Conflict**
w/ Christy Vines (moderator), Rev. Dr. Alison Boden, Afeefa Syeed, and Naomi Ludeman Smith

Women’s involvement in conflict and peacebuilding has looked and functioned differently in past conflicts. This panel will take a look at the key points of impact that women’s involvement and a gender perspective has had on human rights and peacebuilding in select regions around the world.

Rev. Dr. Alison Boden

- Human rights are for all human beings. Women are not a subset. “Women’s right are human rights” is not always a helpful phrase. Sometimes this just silo-s women more.
- Women have been told that they have a false consciousness. That they don’t know what they want. But women are acutely aware of what they want and need. Women just have a different perspective on the world. We need to begin to legitimize that perspective more and integrate it into larger change.

Afeefa Syeed

- Engaging the perspectives of women is vital for community development and advancement, but the foundation for that is often the engagement of religious leadership.
- Religious leaders recognize that their communities are changing and they need (and are asking for) for training and collaboration (e.g., religious leaders asking for training on domestic violence prevention in Afghanistan).
- But there are few resources for this, because people don’t know how to fit religious leaders into traditional development work. While all along, engaging religious leadership is important to advancing human rights and security for women.
- Within the development and human rights sectors, we must look at the identity of religious groups and the culture in which they exist—this is NOT static. This is great, because it gives us an opening for advancement of rights, we just have to learn how to work in this new space. Sometimes the biggest barriers to human rights, development, and security for women are our assumptions about a culture and religion.
- Essentializing and environmentaling religion is important for human rights and security for women.

Naomi Ludeman Smith
• In thinking about engaging this religious space for development, human rights, and security for women, we have to look internally, before we look externally. We have to look at our own identity, theology, and heritage.

• When I first started working in this space, I had to ask myself the question “Why do I feel I have the corner market on truth?” and “How can I work in this arena while bringing together my faith convictions and my heritage?” Basically, how can I write my theology in pencil and still stay true to my convictions? It was these questions that allowed me to be able to work in this space, and showed me that as women, when we do this, we are better able to collaborate, approach religious leadership, and work for human rights, peace, and security.

Questions from Moderator, Christy Vines

Question to Rev. Dr. Alison Boden: *What are the politics of gender and religion that we need to think critically about in relation to conflict mediation and human rights during times of conflict? How does a religious versus secular approach contribute to or detract from women’s engagement in these areas?*

• The problem is that many will say that any religious tenant is beyond reproach or engagement.

• So many religious leaders are women—often informal with a lot of responsibility. Engaging these women (by secular women) can be a lynchpin to advancing human rights in religious contexts.

• We need to choose our discourse (religious or secular) carefully. Religious restrictions and secular laws need to be navigate.

Question to Afeefah Syeed: *Since culture plays such an important role in how human rights are framed and function, how do we keep from being culturally relative, but rather find a space to engage international frameworks? What are potential models that we can look to where this has been successful?*

• We need to start with culture. There is a push and pull between our own convictions and “going native.” We need to look at a culture and see what’s working that aligns with human rights norms. At USAID, we call this “Appreciative Inquiry,” where we look at what’s working instead of always asking “what’s the problem?”

• We also need to look at the words that we’re using. Maybe we should stop talking about “women’s rights and empowerment” and instead start to look at the cultural norms that are consistent to supporting human rights, and then address how they can/should apply to women specifically.

• We can look at the constitutional rights of the countries where we’re working and ask if they fundamentally undermine the rights of women—go from there.

• Be very careful! Don’t let your agenda mess up the trade off of rights for women. Maybe women don’t want what you’re offering and would rather have something else.

• Basically I’m saying that we need to engage the religious/secular balance first and then move in an educated way toward human rights and security for women.

Question for Naomi Ludeman Smith: *Do you have specific examples where gender and religious frameworks have played a positive role in human rights and/or gender justice issues in conflict areas? What skills are required in order for women to successfully negotiate within these frameworks?*

• Never underestimate the power of positive thinking as an approach. The characteristics of positivity give us abundant change-agency, and can serve to sustain us in the midst of desolate situations. As women both religious and secular, we need to cultivate this together.
We need to be “clever as serpents and innocent as doves” in our approach. This includes being wise, watchful, and nuanced, which means being culturally-literate (know yourselves; know others) before and while you/we engage.

Comments from Audience
Participant Comment: *When you get into gender issues you have to have self-criticism of gender in your own culture/religion/society before you can approach that in others. How do you approach gender in human rights without getting in the weeds of finger pointing?*

Response from Panel:
- There is a difference between movement and change. It has been shown that in business, women impact the “bottom line.” (e.g., When women are on executive boards, the company’s income increased by 53%.)
- When you can find the shared experiences that speak to everybody, you can shift from movement to change.
- We have to get outside of our bubble and look at human rights in a different context. This gives us a more critical eye to our own experience. This can be reflected in the great quote by Theodore Goldstücker “To know one religion, is to know none.”
- In this self-reflection is critical. We can’t just define ourselves by what we are not. We may have to create our own identity, not just assume one.

Participant Comment: *I think we need to remember that we must be clear about what we want, and be resilient about that. We have to be shrewd and not create more enemies. We have to gain favor and add people to our “positive.” We need to work beside, even when it’s difficult.*

Participant Comment: *We also need to look at the issue of priviledge. How does our priviledge precipitate the injustice that we’re trying to fight? The price of priviledge often isn’t worth it. But we assume that it is. We have the responsibility to be self-critical and recognize our role in engagement the few who are priviledged and use them for good and the human rights of everyone.*

Response from Panel:
- Agreed. We need to wield power within our common humanity and move people out of their framework of oppression.

**Panel Two: Women in Israel and Palestine**

w/ Lara Friedman (moderator), Suhad Masri and Avigail Kormes

Women in Israel and Palestine face unique challenges and are overcoming them in inspirational ways. This panel will take a look at the experience of women and how conflict has shaped their lives.

Suhad Masri
- As a woman, I’m worried a lot as to how we can provide safety to the next generation.
- How do we engage women as leaders for their kids, and walk that fine line of education and advancement while keeping them from getting involved in dangerous political movements? This is a key question and goal of my work and life.
- I feel we need to push our children to go into spaces where we have never been, because that is our future and gives us the possibility of more rights.

Avigail Kormes
I come from a privileged group of Jews in Israel. I know that this gives me priviledge, and so I am trying to use my priviledge to work for the good of others.

In life we are all victims of our choices. The choices of my grandmother were very significant for herself and her family. She made the choice to come to Israel from Germany, and consequently never saw her family again. She made the choice of allowing her son to fight in the war, and consequently never saw him again. We must keep in mind that our choices have significance and can have long term effects not just for us, but for our families.

Questions from Moderator, Lara Friedman

Question to both panelists: What is the role of women working toward human rights, in shaping the role of the men around them?

Avigail Kormes

- Israel is a society of justifying the present. But it’s hard to maintain struggles when you’re always worried about the future, and your families. As a mother in this conflict, I’m afraid that one day my son will become a prison guard, and I am afraid that with the rising of conflict, so too will women in my community feel the effects from their male family members. (e.g., During the 2nd intifada there was a 57% increase in domestic violence in both Israeli and Palestinian homes.) Women have a significant stake in promoting human rights and security for women in both Israel and Palestine. We need to be at the front lines.
- When women understand how something can benefit their security, they’re in.

Suhad Masri

- There are currently 2.2 million women in Palestine. We could be a huge force for human rights promotion, but because we’re always worried about the safety of our family, this takes all of our energy, so we cannot channel it elsewhere.
- I feel like the greatest way to counter this, is social development within our own societies, even while the conflict is going on. Even if we don’t have a state.
- I want my children to have identity, but I worry that if I instill this in my children that it will make them unsafe.
- We must look at the way that women raise their children, and how society-at-large counters that narrative and identity that we instill in them. We must in turn counter society and transform it.
- Our identity is the basis for our future as women. We have to follow-up on the identity of our children even when they’re grown.
- The current occupation is like knowing that a woman is being abused and doing nothing to help.

Question to both panelists: Social trends in Israel and Palestine are going more conservative. Why? Is it the result of unresolved identities?

Suhad Masri

- And political decisions make us sacrifice a lot as women. If politics are in the hands of the conservatives, people move to that camp. Sometimes that’s where the security is.

Avigail Kormes

- I think we see a conservative movement, but also a counter. There are current restrictions for $ on political parties that do not allow women. In some ways the situation may seem like it’s...
deteriorating, but often if you look closely, there are new opportunities for women to step into the space.

**Group Discussion: Why Women?**

*Together we will continue to explore what it means to be a woman in Israel and Palestine, what is needed to support their empowerment, and how US women can play a role.*

**Comment:** I think we need to keep in mind that when women enter into these discussions of human rights and security, they are often speaking about personal issues and security, whereas men are primarily focused on national/state security.

**Comment:** I agree that it’s personal. My daily interaction with Israelis, is with soliders. I can’t relate to someone who is agressing me. So how do I find common ground in an unequal equation?

**Comment:** We have to look at the forces that put us in these positions (that make us take actions that we do not want to take) and think about how they got there. Sometimes we need to step outside of the personal and look at the larger narrative.

**Comment:** Many states have a military, Israel is a military that has a state. We need to figure out as women, how to take issues of security from a personal standpoint, and reverse that frame, so we can have influence on a larger sphere that is male-dominated.

**Comment:** From fear we move. It’s the biggest motivator and is something that the military uses often. We need to begin to “see” our own societies—not just focus on the conflict—because if the conflict ends tomorrow, we’re going to be in rough shape. We need to stop using the conflict/occupation as an excuse not to focus on our own issues. This might serve as a small antidote to fear, and would provide a shift from just “Israel-Palestine” to a more inclusive “women combatting injustice,” which would also allow us to focus on some of the minorities that are falling in between the cracks in our own societies.

**Comment:** I have become obsessed with studying the persecution of Jews in Poland. And I realized that it reminds me to forever remember what it is to be a minority, because someone else will always come that will be your minority. When I was in the IDF, I realized that I lost my ability to feel, and I just realized through this meeting that I think I am searching to experience myself as a minority, so I can relate and feel again. Now in Israel, the minority that was persecuted is now the 5% that controls the Israeli Government. Right now I have more questions than answers about this, but I do know that we can’t continue to use the same old tools to combat this.

**Comment:** Can we diagnose a country with PTSD? If so, how do we treat a country? We need to become more aware of our weaknesses, so we don’t project those on other people. We need to come to terms with the fact, and admit, that what we are doing is wrong. But this is hard to do, when there is no social structure in place to help with the recovery process after such an admission. Sometimes the fear of guilt, is worse than fear itself. Right now, this guilt weighs on us, and makes us feel like we do not deserve to feel free. This has to change.

**Comment:** Our challenge today is to remind the Israelis that the occupation is wrong. The ultimate fear is that if Israel does not begin to change, that sympathetic Jewish Israelis will begin to leave.

**Comment:** It’s about activism, not just awareness. We focus so much on joint-programs and thinking across the border that we think our own communities are perfect. Not the case.
Comment: I think we need to take a look again at privilege and our approach. There is a quote by Lyla Watson, “If you are here to help me than you’re wasting your time, but if you are here because your liberation is tied up with mine, than you are welcome.” I think this is true for Israelis, Palestinians, and American women as we strive to advocate. This discussion today, is the most I’ve ever heard about root causes of the conflict, through people’s personal reflection. I’m congratulating this discourse because I’ve never heard it before.

Comment: I think the enemy of fear is hope. When we lose that hope, I believe that we lose it for our children as well. If there is ever a time for hope it is now.

Comment: The people in the refugee camps teach me about hope and patience.

Comment: As I toured the Lincoln Memorial yesterday, I began to wonder if there will ever be a day when freedom for our children from this occupation/conflict will be as obvious as ending slavery is to us now?

Panel Three: Engaging Israel/Palestine as Women of Faith
w/ Kristin McCarthy (moderator), Lynne Hybels, Pat Davis, and Kristen Lundquist

Being an active peacemaker can be a difficult, and controversial, ministry when it comes to Israel-Palestine. Panelists will share lessons learned from their experience engaging their communities and promoting peace, justice and human rights in the Holy Land.

Questions posed by moderator, Kristin McCarthy:
1. How have you engaged this conflict as a US Christian woman?
2. How do women organize differently than men?
3. What are engagement strategies/events that have been successful in your community?
4. How do you use (or how would you like to use) the voices of women from the ground to promote understanding within your own community?

Lynne Hybels

- I was first introduced to this issue at a conference in Amman, and I began traveling regularly to the region to explore further the conflict in the Holy Land. As an American Christian I was shocked by how much I did not know, and by how implicated I was personally in the conversation. This is typically how engage newcomers to the conflict. Most US Christians have no idea that Palestinian Christians exist or that they are leaving a negative footprint in the Holy Land.
- Christian Palestinians were my introduction to this conflict, but by no means the end of my engagement. The local Christian population provides an obvious entry point for American Christians to begin to question their own understanding of the Holy Land and the conflict there.
- I never approach my engagement of Israel-Palestine with a gender mentality. I frequently find myself in rooms and at tables and in leadership groups with me. But now I think there is something to getting women together. I might have always known that – but I haven’t admitted it, or somehow differentiate me from my male colleagues at the table. But this is a very powerful experience, and it is clear that seeing conflict through women’s eyes is so human, so honest and very powerful.
- I’m organizing a women’s trip to the region next Spring – and this has gotten me very excited about that trip.

Pat Davis
I was hard to win over to this issue. Like most of my friends and family I was raised with a traditional, conservative understanding of Israel as God’s people. I was de facto pro-Israel and all the news I read, pictures I saw and textbooks I was taught reinforced the notion that Israel is under attack and we must stand with the beleagured nation. It wasn’t until my second trip to Israel and Palestine (first was with AIPAC, second was with Telos) that I began to see that I had been severely misinformed, that my assumptions had been wrong.

The most important message for my community is pushing back the one narrative that exists in Christian communities, especially in the Bible Belt – where I live. This narrative sees a continuance of Israel and God’s chosen people. With this special relationship to Israel, American Christians are eager to be “on God’s side” and to stand with the Israeli people. This colors the whole perception.

Combating a very one-sided narrative with Telos’ pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, pro-peace message is beginning to be effective in my community. We regularly host human rights activists for speaking events, we are involved in shaping the perceptions of young, local, up-and-coming politicians on this issue, and we are active in working across faith divides on a whole range of issues. We are aiming to take community leaders on a pilgrimage with Telos once a year.

Another great outreach tool is books, movies and documentaries – the more exposure people have to another narrative the better. These small tools spark conversation across my community in some unusual and unexpected places.

Women are the key interlocuters in my community. They are the ones at soccer games, gossiping at the grocery store, coordinating car pool and running community meetings and PTAs. Women are the fibers that hold the community together and make it function. I truly believe that American christian women are the most important factor in changing the conversation about Israel and Palestine.

Kristen Lundquist

After living in the Middle East and seeing the way that women of faith moved in the human rights and peacebuilding sector, I was amazed at how women, in a way that was socially acceptable, moved from domestic to academic to professional spheres. They were able to contribute and gain knowledge of all of these spaces in a way that most men cannot.

I think as women we need to be asking ourselves how we can better emulate Matthew 10:16. We are really good at being innocent as doves, now how do we become shrewd as serpents in our fight for human rights in the region? How do we leverage our money, our connections, our political capital to make change happen?

I think the psychological has huge impact here. Studies have shown that when conflict hits, men’s first priority is justice, whereas women’s first priority is the preservation of relationships. Are women built to hold society together? Another study I found reveled that when men and women experience stress they both have a rush of cortisol and epenephrine into their blood stream, which causes feeling of distress and pain. The body’s response is an oxytocin rush to counter (basically nature’s Zoloft). However, men have a significant lesser amount of oxytocin in their system (because of reproductive differences), so stress, especially emotional or psychological stress is much more painful for men than it is for women. Case in point, when men come upon conflict they “fight or flight,” when women come upon conflict they “tend and befriend.”

In thinking about the psychological, and how we as women are geared to uniquely heal this conflict and our own societies, we need to first focus on the core lies of our society. In my church we have been discuss the core lies that women often tell themselves that impacts how they approach and behave toward various issues. If we are going to make a change, we must identify
what these core lies are. (e.g., God loves some more than others. We are responsible for our own security because God is not enough.)

- In bringing awareness to the Israeli-Palestinian issue at my church, I always keep in mind that people have a tendency to polarize the issue. Middle ground is risky in evangelical circles because it means that people often have to make significant changes to long-held theology. But when talking about the occupation, young women in my church really resonate with personal narratives and can relate to concerns about personal security. This is a great opener for larger discussions. After that, the key is consistency. Keep having these conversations, host dinners, bring in speakers, make sure to provide a balanced narrative, and don’t “cast your pearls before swine” (aka If people only use your conversations to continue bashing and abusing the other side. Stop. It’s only precipitating the problem by honoring their disrespectful discourse.) Come back when they are ready.

- Always have a ready list of resources for people in your church. Especially when women hear personal narratives of Israeli and Palestinian women seeking security and human rights, they want to be plugged into channels where they can advocate and make a difference.

**Working Groups:** *The day’s working groups gathered to discuss key questions surrounding the needs of women actors in peace & conflict within Israel-Palestine.*

1) What are your takeaways from Day 1 that (1) provided you with new or exciting ideas concepts important to the work of human rights and peacebuilding in I-P; (2) are important to leveraging previous and current efforts for greater impact in the future; and, (3) how might you implement these concepts into your own work and efforts?

**Group 1**

- Came to realize and understand the difficulty that North American Evangelicals have in telling the Israeli-Palestinian narrative, and countering long-held theologies.
- Have become more sympathetic to progressive Israelis who are trying to advocate for Palestinians.
- Received effective tools regarding how to respond to blowback when advocating for Palestinians (e.g., being called anti-semitic).
- Gained an appreciation for self-reflection, and “living in our own truth.”

**Group 2:**

- The tone and tenor of this space is amazing. There is a spirit of fairness here that is rare.
- This meeting was significant because it highlights the potential of women, but also highlights that there is a something keeping us from reaching that potential.
- It was valuable to see the blowback that Israelis and Palestinians get from their own communities when they advocate for the human rights of the “other.”
- It brought home the fact that fear is often what separates us, but also what we most have in common.

**Group 3:**

- For those who are new to this group, the exposure to the places and people of Israel and Palestine is valuable. And there is a hope that U.S. women will come to Palestine to get to know the people firsthand.
- Brought home the importance of witnessing and personal connections in facilitating greater
understanding and involvement.

- Highlighted the importance of vocabulary in defining our terms and assumptions (e.g. occupation vs. conflict).
- It showed that allowing for vulnerability to push the conversations forward is vital (e.g., language, stories, honesty—emotional and otherwise—often is particular to female spaces but needs to be translated to shared spaces.)
- The gathering was important because it provided an opportunity to leverage partnerships between human rights orgs in Israel-Palestine.
- This gathering is the beginning and could help to ensure that there is always a space in the U.S. and Israel-Palestine for our voices. That is why it is so important that the connections made here continue over email, skype, and further meetings.

2) What approaches or models have you found successful in your work in this space and how might those be changed/challenged based on yesterday’s discussions, if at all?

**Group 1:**

- We must use the stories of women and their families as the centerpiece.
- Instead of quelching the fear, we must sit with it, get to know it, listen, and then address long-term. No quick fix, because these are consequences that ripple through families and generations.
- We need a model of honesty.
- We need an alternative to politics as a vehicle for change, allowing more people to enter into the space.
- Would be interested to hear models for approaching different types of settlers.

**Group 2:**

- The skill of active listening is something that is invaluable in this field. It is far and away something that allows you to actually move forward in working for human rights.
- It is important to recognize that at times conservatives working for human rights feel marginalized by lefties who think they are the only ones. We need to be including these people in our discourse, because they can then speak into their own populations.

**Group 3:**

- Language is critical. Making sure to be honest without alienating your audiences.
- We must cultivate the great trifecta of 1) Faith, 2) Humanity, and 3) Intellect.
- We can’t underestimate the importance of narrative, stories, and creativity.

3) Who are the partners or stakeholders missing from the table that are critical to the sustainability and impact of the work of human rights and women’s justice in I-P—both religious and secular? What additional resources or tools are needed?

**Group 1:**

- Men need to be included.
- Refugees that are outside of the Israel-Palestine.
- Under-empowered groups in Israel.
- A network of pastors including women religious leaders who can influence their
constituency.
• Include pastors who are outside of the U.S.—advocate to them about the issues of the conflict—then have them speak to their peers in the U.S. about it.

**Group 2:**
• We need a list of individuals (and a list of the lists) who are advocates or could come and speak to bring awareness.
• We need to reach out to communities that are in the midwest (USA).
• Students focused on social justice on university campuses.

**Group 3:**
• Gender dynamics need to be evaluated so that men’s and women’s groups can come together and partner.
• Equality within Israel should be a part of the conversation.
• Gaza, refugees who are not at the table.
• Jewish religious women should be included
• We need to garner support from people in DC/MD/VA outside the beltway.

**The goal of including these groups is to expand our lens. Sometimes it is helpful to also engage the people who don’t have a stake in the conflict, in order to get models and resources that are neutral and refining.**

4) How can this network be utilized in other conflicts and in other regions? If so, how?

**Group 1:**
• Look at examples of South Africa and Ireland and borrow their models.
• We could ask people who are already using narrative forms of advocacy about what is successful for them.
• We need a list of lessons learned from the women in this group.

**Group 2:**
• We need to look at and address the psychological barriers that impact women. How do we move people out of being hopeless?
• We need to cast a big vision but also allow people to do small but measurable things.
• We need to build solidarity with people from other cultures and faiths, because eventually they will be looking and learning from the models that we used.
• I think coming to these workshops in and of itself can be a form of therapy—maybe that’s a model that people could apply elsewhere.

**Group 3:**
• We can model for others the way that we have used the power of champions for our cause/issue.
• We could help people figure out how to decontextualize their issues related to systems of power/privilege.
• We could empower people and challenge them to be effective advocate by not just fixing the
Commitments: Each participant was asked to write down one tangible and measurable goal that they would like to work on after this conference had ended.

Erika Abdelatif: Develop a strategy to use creativity as a means to bring awareness to my generation.
Nadia Ben-Yousef: Will share Adalah’s U.S. advocacy strategy with partners in Israel-Palestine and the U.S. for feedback and joint-engagement.
Chelsey Berlin: Participate in and facilitate honest, critical, and engaging discussions of human rights in Israel-Palestine.
Laura Cox: Start “Israel-Palestine 101” classes at Rock Harbor Church, to get the conversation started.
Miriam Davis: Educate students that are getting ready to go to college about what is going on there, so that maybe they will later on make a difference.
Dina Feldman: Host Palestinians and others in my home. Bring Israeli and others to meet Palestinians. Participate in meetings together with Palestinians and other communities. Mentor and facilitate initiators of Israeli-Palestinian projects.
Karen Getman: Listen to what women are saying in Israel-Palestine, and give specific support and encouragement.
Lynne Hybels: Schedule a trip to Israel-Palestine specifically to spend more time with women on the ground, and expand that into a Telos’ women trip. Also, develop www.webelongtoeachother.org.
Avigail Kormes: Be a resource for existing information about Israeli society and issues. Serve as a contact to Israeli organizations and activists.
Kristen Lundquist: Send out a survey to the group to record their “lessons learned,” in order to leverage these in this and other conflicts.
Suhad Masri: Expose and introduce Telos to the Christian and Samaritan communities in Nablus.
Mona Sabella: Follow-up on the new and old relationships made in this conference upon returning to Palestine.
Anat Saragusti: Reach out to communities in the U.S. and make myself available as a resource and help. Use what I’ve heard and learned in my work. Write an op-ed using what I’ve learned at this conference.
Maureen Shea: Urge others to visit Israel-Palestine, meet with those on both sides, and become activists.
Mary Kay Turner: Contact my representatives in congress about the wall in the Cremisan Valley.
Eilda Zaghmout: Start my women’s center in 2 months to help Palestinian women see their potential in making change by discovering how powerful they are.
No name given: Share and continue to inform members of our community about the Israeli-Palestinian issue with the intent of planing a trip to the region composed of young decision-makers.

Panelists: (in alphabetical order)

Rev. Dr. Alison L. Boden is Dean of Religious Life and of the Chapel at Princeton University, a position she has held since August 2007. Previously, she served twelve years as Dean of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel and Senior Lecturer in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, and as co-chair of its Human Rights Program board. Dean Boden is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and served as the Protestant chaplain at Union College as well as the University Chaplain for Bucknell University before joining the University of Chicago in 1995. She received her A.B. in drama from Vassar College, her M.Div. at Union Theological Seminary and her Ph.D. from the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom. She has authored numerous articles and chapters on religion in addition to a book, Women’s Rights and Religious Practice (Palgrave 2007). At Princeton and Chicago, her course offerings have included such topics as religion and human rights, the rights of women, and religion and violence. She has participated in a variety of capacities with numerous non-governmental organizations, including...
Religions for Peace, the Institute for Global Engagement, UNFPA, the Parliament of the World’s Religions, and the Carter Center, particularly on the topic of women of faith as intentional agents of peace-building and security.

Pat Davis helped many families in trouble, especially focused on young women who had suffered abuse, addiction, or were dealing with the consequences of unwanted pregnancy. She was a surrogate parent for many of these troubled girls and affected many lives as a result of teaching them how to mother their children and prevent the cycle from repeating. Through it all she always shared the love of Christ. She led a cross-cultural ministry in Louisville, KY in one of the largest political refugee apartment complexes in the Midwest. By her service to many families she brought together many disparate ethnic groups culminating in the “First Thanksgiving” in America for hundreds of residents. These people included Muslims and Christians who had been in open conflict in Balkans. Pat has reached out to new neighbors to make them feel at home. It has led to dynamic friendships and dialogue discussing spiritual truths, reconciliation, and cultural issues without conflict. Her focus was always making friends and building bridges by serving others. Pat has gained most all of her conflict resolution skills through raising six children. In 2011, Pat and her husband former Congressman Geoff Davis facilitated numerous public forums with a group from the West Bank to raise awareness. They had the chance to interact with college students, the business community, and numerous Palestinian Christians.

Lara Friedman is Director of Policy and Government Relations for Americans for Peace Now (APN). A former U.S. Foreign Service Officer, Lara served in Jerusalem, Washington, Tunis, and Beirut (and briefly in Khartoum). Widely recognized as an authority on U.S. policy in the Middle East, Congress and the Middle East, Israeli settlements, and Jerusalem, she meets frequently with Members of Congress and congressional staff, Administration officials, foreign diplomats, and other members of the foreign policy community. She is a trusted resource for journalists and policymakers, and regularly publishes opinion and analysis pieces in the U.S. and Israeli press. Lara also works closely with the Jerusalem expert Danny Seidemann and has participated in Track II peace efforts, including the Jerusalem Old City Initiative. Lara has a B.A. from the University of Arizona and a Master's degree from Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. She speaks French, Spanish, Arabic, and rather poor Italian.

Lynne Hybels and her husband started Willow Creek Community Church in 1975. Lynne has been an active volunteer in Willow Creek's ministry partnerships in under-resourced communities in the Chicago area, Latin America and Africa. Since getting involved with Casa de Luz, Willow’s Spanish-speaking congregation, she has become an active supporter of comprehensive immigration reform. After traveling to the Democratic Republic of Congo, she established a personal fundraising initiative, Ten For Congo, to support the thousands of women and girls brutally raped during Congo’s ongoing civil war. In 2008 Lynne began traveling regularly to the Middle East to learn more about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She has spoken at conferences in Bethlehem and co-hosted evangelical leaders traveling to the Holy Land to better understand the conflict. Lynne has written inspirational books and articles on personal healing, global poverty, HIV/AIDS, immigration, multi-faith relationships, peacemaking, and Christians in the Holy Land. She served as a board member of the Africa Advisory Board at Willow Creek Community Church and on the U.S. Board for World Vision. Lynne holds a B.A. in Social Sciences from Bethel College. Lynne and her husband Bill have two adult children, Shauna and Todd, one son-in-law, Aaron Niequist, and two grandsons extraordinaire, Henry and Mac, who run the family.

Avigail Kormes has served as the NIF's Democracy, Civil and Human Rights grants officer since 2011, a position she moved to from her previous role as grants officer of the NIF's Social Justice Pool. Her work at the NIF focuses on combating racism and safeguarding democracy and human rights in Israel; due to the current political climate, she has recently focused also on the issue of promoting the rights of asylum seekers. Before joining the NIF five years ago, Avigail worked at the development department of Shatil. Avigail comes from a legal background and is a member of the Israeli Bar Association. She received her
LL.B. and LL.M. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she was awarded the Hebrew University Faculty of Law Justice Shalom Kassan Prize for outstanding students for second and third degrees. She was raised in the kibbutz movement and from a young age has held the values of social and civil service. Avigail is currently a member of Kibbutz Tzora near Jerusalem.

Kristen Lundquist is the Program Officer for Religion, Security, and Gender. In this position, Kristen works with IGE's Center for Women of Faith & Leadership (CWFL) and the Muslim-majority World initiatives, as well as provides consultation on IGE foundation proposals and grants. Prior to her tenure at IGE, Kristen served as a consultant to numerous women's NGOs in program management, research and analysis, development, and communications. In 2005, she lived in the Middle East, based out of Egypt, and doing research in Syria, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, and Jordan, examining women's roles in Christian-Muslim relations and U.S.-Middle East foreign policy. Her research interest focuses on the role and impact of women-of-faith in peacebuilding and security formation within the Muslim-majority world. In 2011, Kristen's research "Women, Religion, Peace, and Security in the Middle East," was published by the Global Consortium on Security Transformation. Stay tuned for Kristen, Dr. Chris Seiple and Hien Vu's upcoming chapter on "Evangelical Women and Transformative Peace-building," in Peace on Earth: The Role of Religion in Peace and Conflict Studies (Lexington Books, forthcoming). Kristen holds an M.A. in World History from Eastern Illinois University, a B.A. in Ancient History, and a B.A. in Biblical Studies with a focus on Near East Languages from Northwestern College. She also holds a certificate in Religion and Conflict Resolution from Nyack College. Kristen currently resides in Washington, D.C.

Suhad Masri is the Psychosocial Program Manager at Tomorrow's Youth Organization- an American nonprofit organization based in Nablus, Palestine. She has been a personal counselor in Palestine for more than seven years. Prior to joining the TYO team in May 2008, she served as a Psychologist and Family Therapist for Medecins du Monde (France) in Nablus. She specializes in therapy for women who suffer from domestic abuse, group therapy for children and families that have suffered a loss due to violence. Suhad worked at St. Joseph’s Neighborhood Center as a Family Therapist while earning her Master of Arts in Family Therapy from the University of Rochester in New York (United States). For her practicum, she worked across generational lines with both individuals and groups conducting bio-psychosocial assessment, family systems theory, psycho-education and behavioral modification in both brief and long-term therapy models. Suhad also has a Master of Arts in Art Therapy (thesis outstanding) from European University in Switzerland, and Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from An Najah University in Nablus.

Kristin McCarthy serves as Special Assistant for the Telos Group. In this role Kristin works closely with human rights advocates from Israel and Palestine to educate US policymakers, civil society actors and faith communities across the US. Kristin graduated from Seattle Pacific University with degrees in History and International Affairs. Her studies concentrated on Middle Eastern politics and society as well as American foreign policy towards the region. Kristin spent a summer volunteering in Israel/Palestine and completed a Middle Eastern studies program in Cairo, Egypt. Directly after graduating, Kristin worked for World Vision International as a Peacebuilding Research Assistant; her research contributed to integrating conflict sensitivity into aid and development programs. Kristin was raised in California and now happily lives in Washington, D.C.

Naomi Ludeman Smith, D.Min., is an associate professor of intercultural studies at Bethel University, St. Paul, Minnesota where she is a member of the White House Interfaith and Community Service Challenge Advisory Committee. She’s led numerous study, research and humanitarian service initiatives to the Middle East and Ukraine, partnering with global citizens for the sake of peace. In October she was invited to lead women’s interfaith and peacemaking initiatives in the U.S. with Peace Catalyst International staff. Her degrees are from Bethel University and Bethel Seminary.
Afeefa Syeed is Senior Advisor at the US Agency for International Development where she works with USAID staff in Washington and the field to develop policy, define best practices, highlight success stories, and otherwise build internal capacity and tools to frame country strategies that reflect greater expertise in engaging with the cultural contexts we serve. She designs and implements initiatives and training to address engaging traditional and religious leaders and institutions, radicalization, socio-political identity, mainstreaming gender, social entrepreneurship, and other emerging programs. As a cultural anthropologist, Afeefa's work has included communities in Europe, South East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East and North Africa. Afeefa has worked for the past 25 years with various international and grassroots NGOs and development agencies in areas of youth and women participation and leadership, civic education and engagement, good governance, education and curriculum reform, and advocacy. Afeefa founded a model school whose core curriculum is peace education and civic engagement and she is a member of various interfaith, social service and advocacy organizations in the US. Her involvement and community activism led her to run for local office in 2003 as the Democratic candidate for the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors in the State of Virginia.

Christy Vines, MPA, is the Senior Vice President for Global Initiatives and Strategy at the Institute for Global Engagement. She serves as the coordinating lead in the development of the Institute’s institutional partnership and global initiative strategies, as well as overseeing IGE’s external outreach and communications. In addition, Ms. Vines is responsible for directing the Institute’s Center for Women of Faith & Leadership. Prior to joining IGE, Ms. Vines served as the Director of Strategic Partnerships for the RAND African First Ladies Initiative (AFLI). In this capacity, she was responsible for the development of multi-sector partnership strategies around first lady priority policy issues and projects. In its first four years, the program worked with 24 first ladies and 36 of their senior advisors, leading to the formalization of multiple First Ladies' offices and platforms, and resulting in more than 20 international collaborations in support of first ladies' efforts to address MDGs across Africa. Earlier in her career, Ms. Vines held senior positions in the private sector, including Senior Portfolio Manager and Director of Investment Research at Westmount Asset Management in Los Angeles, CA. She has a B.A. in Sociology with a minor in quantitative research, and received her Master’s degree in Public Administration from Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government with an emphasis on foreign policy and national security.